

EXECUTION OF DYNAMIC SERVICES
IN A FLEXIBLE ARCHITECTURE FOR E-COMMERCE

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is related to U.S. Patent Application Serial Number _____ filed concurrently herewith entitled NETWORK DYNAMIC SERVICE AVAILABILITY by the same inventors as the present application and assigned to the same assignee as the present application, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

The present invention relates to the distribution and execution of computationally intensive services over a plurality of networked computer systems. More particularly, the invention relates to a system which dynamically registers network resources, and tracks their availability to execute a requested service (job) by evenly distributing (balancing) the job's load for execution across available networked resources.

Computationally intensive services have traditionally been executed on mainframe systems. Some systems have recently been developed that allow for distributing the load of computationally intensive jobs

(services) over many networked computer systems. As a result, conventional distributed computing systems, such as banks or networks of workstations, servers or mirrored sites ("hosts") on the World Wide Web (WWW) must address the problem of using their distributed system resources effectively. For example, in conventional systems where some hosts (system resources or servers) lie idle while others are heavily loaded, system performance can decrease significantly. To prevent such unbalanced and inefficient performance and use of system resources, attempts have been made to distribute a service-execution load throughout the conventional distributed computer system's networked resources.

However, distributing a load for execution across networked resources can raise load balancing issues. Load balancing includes distributing processing and communication activity evenly across a computer network so that no single device is overused. Load balancing may improve performance measures such as the expected time a task stays in the system.

For example, very few enterprises can afford to host their company's web site on a single, monolithic server. Rather, sites are deployed on server clusters that improve performance and scalability. To provide

fault tolerance and hide cluster detail from site visitors, a load balancing appliance sits between the INTERNET and the server cluster, acting as a virtual server.

5 As each new client request arrives, the load balancing appliance makes near instantaneous intelligent decisions about the physical server best able to satisfy each incoming request. Load balancing optimizes request distribution based on factors like capacity,
10 availability, response time, current load, historical performance and administrative weights. A well-tuned adaptive load balancer ensures that customer sites are available 24X7 with the best possible response time and resource utilization.

15 Although determining an effective load balancing strategy depends largely on the details of the underlying system, general models from both queuing theory and computer science often provide valuable insight and general rules of thumb. For example, in a
20 system comprising N servers, incoming tasks must be assigned a server and wait for service. Logic would have it that if an incoming task knows exactly the current number of tasks already queued at each server, then the task can be instantaneously queued. It is usually best

for the task to be routed to the server with the shortest queue if the tasks are of about equal size. However, there are many different algorithms for Load Balancing. In many actual systems, however, it is unrealistic to assume that tasks will have access to up-to-date load information. While global information may be updated only periodically, the time delay for a task to be moved to a server may still be so long that the load information is out of date by the time the task arrives.

Other than operation within conventional systems in which up-to-date load information is available, the strategy of going to the shortest queue can lead to disastrous results when load information is out of date by the time the task arrives. Consequently, certain resources may be over utilized while others are under utilized. But even in conventional systems where load balancing issues are addressed, computational resources are not dynamically available. Hence, some means of handling variable (dynamic) availability of resources, such as computational resources, is needed to render the execution system much more scalable and robust.

To that end, U.S. Patent No. 5,991,808, provides a system for servicing a job, such as by use of

5 a plurality of processing units or hosts. In a
multiprocessor system, the processing units could all be
part of a single computer device, such as a high power
work station with multiple processors. Alternatively
each of the processing units could be a single computer,
when linked together form a bank or network of servers or
workstations each of which include a single processor.

10 A task directing unit, which may be a client
processor in a distributed computing environment such as
a network, the Web or part of a multiprocessor computer
device itself, is interconnectable to each of the
plurality of system resources. The task directing unit
is configured to first obtain load information
representing a loading of each of a number of resources
15 selected uniformly at random (u.a.r.). Preferably, the
task directing unit simultaneously queries each of the
randomly selected resources for load information. Each
randomly selected resource is configured to respond to
the query with load information representing its loading.

20 While the '808 patent addresses load balancing
issues in this manner, it does not address dynamic
availability of computational resources. As stated,
during system operation, the task directing unit must
query each known resource for its scheduling. That is,

new resources are not dynamically available to facilitate expeditious and balanced distribution of tasks over available system resources.

The Objects and Summary of the Invention.

5 It is therefore an object of this invention to provide a system which dynamically accepts and registers new resources for execution therein which overcomes the shortcomings of the prior art.

10 It is another object of the invention to provide a system which dynamically accepts and registers new resources (or removes existing resources), and distributes a processing load of computationally intensive user-requested services across the dynamically available system resources, whether "new" or previously registered.

15 It is another object of this invention to provide a system which will balance the distribution of a computationally intensive load across all dynamically available system resources (servers) such that none of the dynamically available system resources are under or over utilized.

20 It is another object of the invention to provide a system in which system resources are dynamically found and made available such that the system

need not be stopped or reconfigured to make use of the new resources.

5 To that end, an inventive system is disclosed herein which dynamically accepts and registers new resources, and distributes a service to be executed by the system across all dynamically available networked resources. That is, the system will balance the service load distribution for execution across all presently available system resources. A key aspect of the invention is its ability to dynamically find new resources and services and register them within the system immediately upon their availability. An obvious benefit to dynamic availability of system resources is that the system does not need to be stopped or reconfigured for it to make use of a "new" resource immediately upon registration of the new resource in a system registry.

10 To that end, an Execution Manager, Load Balancer and Compute Server are system software components which implement the unique processing and resource tracking ability of the system of this invention. The Execution Manager is located on an Execution Server to which each system user must interface in order to have a service executed. During operation, the Execution Manager waits for jobs, e.g.,

5 computationally intensive algorithms, to be submitted to
it from a user. The reader should note that these jobs
could be submitted directly by the user to a server, or
could be services purchased by a user through a browser,
etc.

10 Upon receipt of the job, the Execution Manager
checks Execution Manager Services which dynamically
maintains a registry of all Load Balancers presently
available. Each Load Balancer manages one or more
Compute Servers. Each Compute Server object represents a
networked device that is capable of executing a job or
some portion thereof.

15 The first Load Balancer found by the Execution
Manager Services receives the request for service and
then searches for all Compute Servers presently
(dynamically) available to execute the service identified
in a Compute Services. The Compute Services dynamically
maintains a registry of all Compute Servers available to
the Load Balancer, and thereafter distributes and
20 executes the service so that no single Compute Server is
over or under utilized.

The fact that the system dynamically finds Load
Balancers and Compute Servers each time a service
requires execution ensures that the system will be aware

of new Load Balancers and new Compute Servers immediately upon availability. The dynamic nature of the inventive system also ensures that the system will not try to use a resource that is no longer available; the Compute Server for that discontinued service simply won't be found.

Brief Description of the Drawing Figures

Fig. 1 is a schematic block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the system of this invention; and

Fig. 2 is a flow diagrams which together depict an embodiment of a method for implementing a process of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

A first embodiment of a system 100 of the present invention is depicted in Fig. 1. A user browser 110 is shown in communication with an Execution Server 120 of system 100. Execution Server 120 provides the mechanism for all user services to run, particularly compute intensive jobs distributed across various Compute Servers within the system. Compute Servers run on a specific machine and make themselves available to run executable objects by registering with Lookup Servers. Compute Servers are expected to keep statistics about their own history of running Executables. These

statistics may be used by the Load Balancer. The Execution Server 120 includes an Execution Manager servlet 140, a Results Manager servlet 150 and a Results Finder servlet 160. The Results Finder servlet 160 is included for executing and storing the results of computationally intensive jobs. The Execution Manager 140 also serves as the means of processing all services via Compute Servers.

The Execution Manager 140 is a servlet that allows a constant point of entry for the client applet. The Execution Manager 140 listens for communications from the user browser 110 in a form of a client applet supplied to it by the user browser. When a connection is made, the Execution Manager 140 tries to read an Executable object from the client applet using the object input stream. If there is an error reading the Executable, an error message is returned to the user via the client applet. When the Execution Manager 140 has read a valid Executable, it attempts to pass the job to a Load Balancer 180, submitting the job to the first one found. The Execution Manager 140 could also determine which Load Balancer to use algorithmically, if needed

Execution Manager 140 utilizes a Lookup Finder object of Execution Manager Services 170 to find the

first available Load Balancer 180. The Lookup Finder object is a helper class that encapsulates the commands necessary to find Lookup Servers. Load Balancer objects discover all available Compute Servers at a specific point in time and use one of several criteria to select the most eligible Compute Server to run a specific job. Only one Compute Server need be running at a time unless the system is overloaded. The Load Balancer 180 in turn utilizes a Lookup Finder object of Compute Services 190 to find the Compute Servers 130 immediately accessible by the Load Balancer 180. Each Load Balancer 180 has a Computer Services 190 for managing one or more computer servers available to it, but for clarity these elements are only depicted for one Load Balancer in Fig. 1. Load Balancer 180 determines, based on known Compute Server 130 availability, how and which Compute Servers to distribute the job over so that none of the Compute Servers 130 are under or over utilized. Load Balancer 180 accesses the Lookup Finder of Compute Services 190 to identify all Compute Servers 130 immediately available to the Load Balancer.

The Load Balancer 180 then passes the job to the most eligible Compute Servers 130 based on the total amount of time each Compute Server has spent on jobs, or

5 based on the last time each Compute Server 130 completed
a job. These are configurable options and criteria for
selecting a Compute Server 130 could easily be
implemented and added to the system 100 by amending the
Lookup Finder object for the Compute Services 190. If no
Load Balancer 180 is available through Execution Manager
Services 170, the Execution Manager 140 returns a
diagnostic message to the user browser 110 via a client
applet. Otherwise, the Execution Manager 140 invokes the
10 Load Balancer's run job method with the Executable as a
parameter. If the run job is successful, execution
passes to the Results Manager 150 which is given a unique
job I.D. The same job I.D. is returned to the user
browser 110 via the client applet with the Executable for
15 identification purposes.

Information about the owner of the Executable
is stored using a result object provided by the Results
Manager 150 to a Results Archive 200. The Results
Manager 150 is a Java servlet that takes a Result object
20 from a Compute Server after a job has been completed and
prints the results in a unique file in the results area.
The information may be interchangeably referred to herein
as a "Result". That is, the Results Manager servlet 150

combines the Result with the job ID to create a unique path to the Result (URL). The URL of the Result is sent first to the Results Finder servlet 160, where it is further transferred to the User Browser 110 by e-mail from the Results Finder servlet 160 via the Execution Server 120.

The Compute Server runs the Executable by invoking its runMe method, which will return a Results object. Once the Compute Server has updated its own statistics, such as time running and jobs completed, it passes the Results to the Results Manager 150, as described above.

Fig. 2 depicts a method of the present invention whereby user services for execution are distributed among a number of Compute Servers 130, the execution Result is stored and the user is informed by email of the location of the Result. In particular, block 250 of Fig. 2 represents a step where a user's request for service is submitted to the Execution Server 120. Block 300 represents a step where the user service for execution is provided by the Execution Server 120 to the Execution Manager servlet 140. Block 350 represents a step by which the Execution Manager searches the Execution Manager Services 170 for a Load Balancer 180.

Block 400 represents a step where the Load Execution Manager Services 170 either finds an available Load Balancer 180, or, if not, passes the process flow to block 450 where a Load Balancer may be automatically (or manually) started. Block 500 depicts a step where the Execution Manager submits the service for execution to the Load Balancer. The Load Balancer 180 thereafter searches for available Compute Servers capable of executing the service using the Compute Server Lookup Finder of Compute Services 190. Block 600 depicts a step where the Load Balancer distributes the service load across the Compute Servers available or registered with it per its query of the Compute Services 190 such that no Compute Server is under or over utilized.

Block 650 depicts a step where the Compute Servers 130 complete the processing and direct the Result to the Results Manager servlet 150. Block 700 depicts a step where the Results Manager servlet transfers the Result to the Result Archive 200. Block 750 represents a step where the Result Archive directs a pointer to the Result to the Results Finder servlet 160. Block 800 represents a step where the Results Finder servlet 160 provides the pointer to the Result stored in the Results archive 200 to the user or service requester 110.

It should be noted that while not apparent from the drawing figures, all Compute Servers and Load Balancers are automatically (dynamically) registered or deleted from the respective Load Balancer Execution Manager Servers 170 and Compute Server Compute Services 190. The dynamic update process registers and deletes ComputerServers and Load Balancers. The Execution Manager dynamically finds Load Balancers (by contacting any Lookup servers on the network and requesting information about Load Balancers). The Load Balancers, in turn, perform the same type of dynamic location of Compute Servers. When a new Load Balancer or ComputerServer is started on the network, they will register themselves with a Lookup Server; when the Execution Manager needs to locate Load Balancers or when a Load Balancer needs to find Compute Servers, they both contact the Lookup Server which informs them of the new services.

All computational resources in the system are registered with the Lookup Server on a leased basis (a lease can be created for any time interval, from seconds to infinity), and the system automatically monitors each resource. If a ComputerServer vanishes from the network (for example, a computer loses power and becomes

inoperative), the lease with the LookupServer will expire, and the defunct Compute Server will vanish from the Lookup Server's registry preventing access.

5 The dynamic resource process can be more specifically described as follows. All Computational services register with Lookup Servers (LookupServers are analogous to registries). If, for example, the Execution Manager needs to locate Load Balancers, it first "discovers" all Lookup Servers(LUS) on the network. It
10 does this by using multicast IP and will obtain a response from all LUSs on the network. Once the Execution Manager knows where these LUSs are, it can contact as many of them as it chooses and request information on any type of services needed; in this case, it would request
15 information on Load Balancers. The LUSs respond with a proxy for each registered entity that matches the request (in our case, they respond with a proxy for every registered Load Balancer). Once the Execution Manager has the proxy, it is used to access the Load Balancer
20 services directly.

The system's ability to dynamically register/delete available Load Balancers and Compute Servers, and to distribute a service load over a number of available Compute Servers for balanced load execution,

enables it to overcome the limitations of conventional distributed computational systems.

Those skilled in the art will recognize that the method and apparatus of the present invention has many applications, and that the present invention is not limited to the representative examples disclosed herein. Moreover, the scope of the present invention covers conventionally known variations and modifications to the system components described herein, as would be known by those skilled in the art.